

done no hurt, and would have engaged men of quality/

comments Halifax.¹ This was in February 1689, when William began his reign. The number of the Council was then fixed at thirty.²

^Before the end of the year the King had come to understand the convenience of a limited council or committee. In

September he discussed with Halifax who should be of the Cabinet' or 'in the Cabinet', meaning thereby a committee

of the Privy Council or 'Cabinet Council'. It is evident

that this body was intended to be 'a Committee of Foreign Affairs' such as Charles II had habitually maintained.

The difficulty, William recognised, was that the various

members of this Cabinet Council, representing a mixture of

parties, had no confidence in each other. In January 1690 he

'agreed the necessity of a Cabinet Council, but said hee did

not know of men, who would speak freely before one another/

Halifax noted many indications which seemed to show

that William did not sufficiently esteem the British peerage,

and did not fully appreciate the political importance of the

House of Lords.³ In March 1689 William said he would

raise regiments, but would not give the command of them to

peers. 'Hee hath taken those away which the Lords had

first raised/ records Halifax, who could not but own that

'the humour and character of a peer of England do not

agree very well with the discipline to which a
colonell must
be subject/ ⁴

Failing to understand the political
importance of the
Lords, William did not at first accept advice
to raise exist-

¹ Halifax, ii. 210, 211, 219, 204.

² No doubt William was inspired by the same theories
which prompted
Temple's scheme for remodelling the Privy Council in 1679.

³ Cf. Macaulay, V, 2265, 2274 (xix).

⁴ Halifax, ii. 205-6.